

Your Health

by Dr. Paul Roumeliotis

Tips on keeping your family safe

Home fires account for approximately 75% of fire deaths and burns.

In the United States, a fire occurs in 1 out of every 17 homes. What's more, accidental burns are the most common form of injury that happens in the home. In our area, we recently lamented several deaths caused by home fires.

To avoid such tragedies, we need to work on prevention. Here are some facts and tips on fire safety and preventing burns.

Fire safety

- Smoke detectors help save lives. Make sure that your home has at least one on every floor (more if possible), and install them in children's rooms.
- Test smoke detectors regularly and make sure the batteries are fresh. A smoke detector is one of the most inexpensive, yet most effective, investments in ensuring your family's safety.
- Don't smoke in bed. This is the main cause of child deaths in home fires.
- Draw up an action plan with your family so that everyone knows what to do in the event of a fire. Plan escape routes from each room in the house and try them out.
- You should have at least one all-purpose extinguisher and know how to use it. Make sure that it is always full, and have it inspected regularly by a qualified technician.
- If you have disposable lighters in your home, make sure they are childproof. Always keep matches in a safe place, out of the reach of children.
- Check and secure all heat sources that could cause burns. Install screens on fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene radiators.
- Your clothing should be flame resistant or flame proof.

Preventing burns

- Don't hold a baby if you have a hot drink in your hand. If you do hold a baby, ensure that your drink is lukewarm and not steaming. Hot tea or coffee can lead to serious burns in babies.
- If you have young children at home, don't put the coffeepot, teapot or other containers holding hot liquids or food on the table. Always make sure that the handles of frying pans and saucepans are turned toward the back of the stove, and use the back burners as much as possible.
- Burns caused by hot tap water are among the most common bathroom injuries, so always fill the tub yourself and test the water temperature before your child gets in.
- One of the best ways to avoid water burns is to set the maximum temperature for your water heater at 49°C (120°F).
- Electric baseboard heaters, radiators and warm-air registers can get very hot. Equip them with protective devices so that your young child cannot touch them and get burned.
- Don't allow young children to play near a hot stove, barbecue or other heat source.
- If you have young children, choose a cool mist humidifier rather than a warm steam humidifier.

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